



**Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs
Summary Meeting Minutes
March 16th, 2010**

Next Full Commission Meeting: **Tuesday, April 20th, 2010**, from **6:00pm to 7:30pm** at 401 Hungerford Drive, Rockville, MD. ****PLEASE NOTE** the new meeting time. Meetings will now be held from 6:00pm – 7:30pm**

I. Call to Order & Introductions: Bill Gray, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Commission on Veterans Affairs (CVA). Bill asked for all present to please stand for a moment of silence for all of those who have given their lives and those who have been wounded for our country in the different conflicts in which our country has been engaged in and to remain standing for the Pledge of Allegiance. All in attendance gave brief introductions.

II. Approval of Minutes: Rich Fales, Commissioner, motioned for the February Meeting Summary Minutes to be approved. Roland Kauffman, Commissioner, seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the February Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved. Approved minutes will be online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva.

III. Veterans Recognition and Memorial Day Planning – Chuck Short, Special Assistant to the County Executive, and Mike Subin, Commissioner

Chuck Short noted that this is the beginning of an important era in Montgomery County for veterans. The Rockville Library will have a formal renaming dedication to the Rockville Memorial Library sometime near Memorial Day.

Also this summer there will be a dedication for the new Silver Spring Civic Building. A major element of the new building is the expanded role of honoring all veterans with the naming of the plaza to Veterans Plaza. The County Executive would like the Commission to advise the planning group. The Veterans Plaza will be a very special way to memorialize all of our veterans, living and deceased, past, present and future. Reemberto Rodriguez, Silver Spring Regional Services Center Director, is looking for ideas on how we can do more to honor veterans. The County is in the process of changing the Civic Building's address to 1 Veterans Plaza. Another item that County Executive Ike Leggett committed to was the establishment of a veteran's collection, such as letters, audio history, and other artifacts. The County is considering housing the collection at the new Silver Spring Civic Building as it has the space and the name. The County will continue to work with the Commission and the Libraries.

A third project to be mindful of is the new Walter Reed National Military Medical Center that will be opening next year in Bethesda.

Also, the County will be commemorating its 150th anniversary of the Civil War next year.

Mr. Short added that with the help of Congressman Van Hollen's office he has begun convening a number of veteran service providers. It is an important group that will be creating a vision of collaboration for services for veterans and their families over the next few years.

Pete Esker noted that a meeting will be held on March 23rd from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. for individuals to learn about the new Civic Building and the Veterans Plaza. It is an opportunity for the public to provide input. It will be held at Discovery Communications in downtown Silver Spring. Pete suggested that Mr. Rodriguez set up a committee to plan the dedication. He will be meeting with Mr. Rodriguez to discuss the Veterans Plaza memorial this week. Some donors have already been approached about donating memorabilia. There is space built into the hallways and the lobbies for Veterans displays.

Mr. Short discussed the new County Circuit Court that is being built within the next few years. Early designs feature a half moon walkway with several niches for different wartime memorials as well as a lighted waterfall and an eternal flame. The County sees the Rockville Memorial Library as a place to honor those who have been killed in action. The Silver Spring Veterans Plaza will honor all Veterans. Mr. Short asked for ideas and advice during the design phase. Jane McCarthy, Commissioner, suggested that the County recognize the Gold Star Mothers and have a ceremony during the dedication of the Circuit Court Memorial where they could lay wreaths. Mr. Short said that one of the niches located along the 25 yard walkway could be for the Gold Star Mothers.

Mauri Hamilton, Commissioner, addressed issues of our last meeting when Parker Hamilton, Director, Public Libraries, discussed having display cases in all of the libraries and the issue of receiving donations. Since the Commission cannot legally accept money, Mr. Short suggested that the Commission create a private non-profit 501(c)(3) so individuals can make tax-deductible contributions either in the form of money or materials. The Commission may want to consult with the Friends of the Library for help and guidance with setting up a 501(c)(3).

Jane McCarthy, Commissioner, inquired about an update on a letter the Commission sent to the County Executive regarding the Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) that was reportedly going to be placed at a military installation. She stressed the importance of having a CBOC be located in the community to make it more accessible. Mr. Short did not have an update, but Bill Gray, Chair, said he would call Councilmember Duchy Trachtenberg, who has been in contact with Congressman Van Hollen and Senator Mikulski, to see if she has more information. Karen McManus, Office of Congressman Chris Van Hollen, noted that Ann Humphrey had attended a meeting in Linthicum where the location of the CBOC was discussed. It was originally planned to be located along the I-270 Corridor, then it was planned to be located at a military base, and now there is a discussion to locate it in Greenbelt. Congressman Van Hollen's office is still pursuing the issue. Mr. Short offered to discuss the option of locating space in Montgomery County with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Rich Schiffauer, Commissioner, gave a brief update on the Veterans Collaborative meeting with Parker Hamilton, Director, Montgomery County Public Libraries, and some employees from the Public Information Office. They discussed having veterans displays, featuring uniforms, letters, and other artifacts, in all of the libraries in May and November. The Veterans Collaborative is working on creating a series of panel discussions to be held at Montgomery College on Veterans Day and taped to be shown at schools as well as incorporated into the library displays. Ms. Hamilton said the tapes could also be available for rent through the libraries. The Public Information Office will be designing a flyer asking for donations.

Betsy Luecking, Staff, was informed by the Connie Latham, Special Assistant in charge of Boards and Committees and Commissions, that the County Executive would need to issue an Executive order to allow the Commission to solicit donations. She asked Commissioners to ask veterans

organizations if they would be willing to loan materials. Mauri Hamilton, Commissioner, made a motion that Mike Subin obtain an Executive Order prior to our next meeting in April. Mike Subin seconded the motion.

Mike made a motion for the Commission to establish a 501(c)(3) in order to receive donations for the library displays. Mauri Hamilton, Commissioner, seconded the motion. A vote was taken and unanimously approved. Mike will work with Betsy on the details of establishing the nonprofit. Mr. Short thanked the Commission for all they do on behalf of the County Executive.

IV. Corrections and Re-Entry Back Into the Community – Gale Starkey, Re-entry Unit Manager, and Joyce Reimherr, Employment Specialist, One-Stop Employment Center, Montgomery County Correctional Facility (MCCF); Bob Pelletier, Veterans Services, and Fred Chandler, Re-entry Employment Specialist, Montgomery Works

Gail Starkey explained that inmates are identified as veterans when they are brought to the detention facility or to the correctional facility. Sometimes inmates will not identify themselves as a veteran because they are afraid they may lose their benefits. MCCF does not notify any agency of a veteran's incarceration. A licensed clinical social worker works with partners in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) located in Martinsburg, WV and Washington, DC. VA workers come into the facility and pre-screen veteran candidates for substance abuse and housing programs.

When a veteran is released, Parole and Probation transfers custody to the VA Hospital the veteran moves to. MCCF is the only correctional facility in the United States with a One Stop Career Center with computers and internet access. The Center was funded by the inmates who donated \$20,000 to retrofit the office, including paint, furniture, and books. Every year the inmates give \$13,000 to help upgrade the books. Ms. Starkey invited the Commission to hold a meeting at their facilities where she will provide a tour and give a full overview of the facility and the programs offered.

Joyce Reimherr coordinates the activities at the One Stop Career Center, where Veterans are given priority. 90 days from release, inmates are asked to attend an orientation on "Effective Job Search and How MontgomeryWorks Can Help". Inmates interested in starting job searches pre-release and learning to be more effective in their job searches as well as on-the-job can sign up to participate in a six session training held over three weeks that covers all aspects of a job search and how to become a top performing employee. Class participants can also work on job searches in the MCCF/Montgomery Works One-Stop Center outside of class hours with assistance from trained community volunteers. 30 days from release, inmates are encouraged to meet with the MontgomeryWorks Community Re-entry Specialist to put a face with the name of the person at MontgomeryWorks in Wheaton who can help them with their job search on the outside. This includes providing information on bonding and other hiring incentives, job search coaching, speaking to employers' on ex-offenders' behalf, and more.

Bob Pelletier is the Local Veterans Employment Representative at MontgomeryWorks. Veterans' representatives provide assistance in completing Maryland Workforce Exchange enrollment, a virtual one-stop network that connects you with workforce information, job leads, training opportunities, and a variety of programs and services to help you make the right choices for future success.

Representatives are trained professional and federal resume writers and provide individuals with labor market information, job fairs, and recruitments events. If the veteran is 55 and older, they are

referred to the Jewish Council on Aging (JCA). If the veteran has a disability, they are referred to the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS). In many cases the Veterans Workforce Investment Program cannot cover the entire cost of training and representatives work with partners at MontgomeryWorks in the Workforce Investment Act to help provide funding for training and certifications. The representatives also assist in requesting copies of the DD214 as well as provide information on how to upgrade their discharge status. They are also able to refer veterans to an Ombudsman for special cases. A State VA Representative is available twice a month to provide assistance with filing or amending service-connected disability claims.

A Montgomery County social worker assists inmates with filing for benefits such as social security, food stamps, and emergency assistance. Once the inmate is released, the inmate submits all the paperwork and the social worker will follow-up with them. Representatives can also provide referrals to VA programs, including homelessness, education benefits, Compensated Work Therapy, and Vet Centers. Representatives visit the MCCF One Stop Center once a month to meet with veterans who are getting ready to be released.

Fred Chandler said that MontgomeryWorks provides opportunities to people that have been incarcerated. It is an extra travesty to have someone who has served their country to be convicted of a crime. It costs the County \$53,000 a year to house and serve one incarcerated individual. MontgomeryWorks works to turn those individuals into contributing members of society. Re-entry Employment Specialists teach incarcerated veterans how to sell themselves to interviewers and explain the positive transformations they have gone through.

Mariam Chase, Staff, asked about individuals with mental health challenges. Mr. Chandler explained that mental health challenges are identified before they reach the MontgomeryWorks program. Re-entry Employment Specialists do an in-depth assessment of every candidate, whether they are a veteran or not.

The State of Maryland has expanded their tax write-offs for hiring. A Federal bonding program will bond an individual for \$5,000 for a six month period once they are hired. Ms. Starkey noted that over half of their population has mental health issues. Psychiatric nurses can provide mental health services for 7, 15, or 30 days to help keep their regimen going until their next mental health appointment. Social workers will assist inmates with locating service providers in Montgomery, Prince George's, Frederick, and Baltimore Counties and the surrounding areas.

Betsy Luecking, Staff, asked if the MontgomeryWorks Veterans Service office had a working relationship with Wayne Miller at the Silver Spring Vet Center. Mr. Pelletier explained that they have a worker available at the Vet Center once a week. Bill Gray, Chair, asked if they serve veterans who have not been incarcerated. Mr. Pelletier said that while they do help non-incarcerated veterans, the majority of those they help have been incarcerated. Mauri Hamilton, Commissioner, asked if they assist veterans in acquiring financial aid. Mr. Chandler explained that there is a training program that is available for everyone, not just veterans. Individual Training Accounts enable MontgomeryWorks to provide vouchers for eligible adult and dislocated workers to purchase occupational skills training from providers selected in consultation with their case managers. Their biggest liaison is with Montgomery College and the Gudelsky Institute for Technical Education.

Lorrie Knight-Major, Commissioner, asked if MCCF had a relationship with drug representatives that could provide samples for inmates who did not have Medicaid in place yet. Ms. Reimherr said

that a psychiatrist is on contract and works in both facilities, as well as holds a private practice within the County. For inmates that are sentenced, they will receive up to a 30 day supply of medication. For those not sentenced, they will receive a 7 day supply.

V. Chair and Vice Chair Report:

Jerry Godwin, Vice-Chair, noted that there is a hard hat tour of the Silver Spring Civic Building and Veterans Plaza scheduled for April 8th at 10:00am at 850 Ellsworth Dr, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Individuals interested in attending should RSVP to Susan Hoffman at 301-565-7300 (V) or e-mail susan.hoffman@montgomerycountymd.gov. Jerry will send an e-mail to the Commission with project information and artist renderings of the Veterans Plaza.

The Veterans Plaza will be a large public open space that will be programmed for festivals and concerts. There will be a pavilion on the plaza where the summer concert series will be held and in the winter there will be an ice skating rink.

The Veterans Plaza will include a memorial commemorating the service of veterans of Silver Spring and Montgomery County. The memorial will be a large art work by Toby Mendez, a Frederick County artist, who did the Thurgood Marshall Memorial at the State Capitol.

The Silver Spring Civic Building will become the center of community activities in Silver Spring. A large Great Hall will be available for banquets, performances and other meetings and presentations. There will be four other community use rooms including a gallery space. The Silver Spring Regional Center will be located in the upper floor of the Civic Building. Round House Theatre School will be located in the lower level of the Civic Building.

VI. Project Updates: None.

VII. Updates / Motions for Commission Action:

Betsy Luecking, Staff, noted that some Commissioners have difficulties attending the Commission meeting on Tuesday as BRAC holds there meetings the same night. She suggested that the Commission meet earlier in the evening. The Commission agreed to meet from 6:00pm to 7:30pm at all future meetings. The time change will occur at our next meeting, April 20th, 2010.

VIII. Roundtable:

Rich Schiffauer, Commissioner, suggested adding Lolita O'Donnell, PhD, RN, Deputy Director, Clearinghouse, Outreach & Advocacy Directorate Defense Centers of Excellence (DCoE) for Psychological Health (PH) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), to the May meeting agenda.

Adjournment: 8:00 p.m.

Respectively submitted,
Carly Clem, OSC
Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison